VALUES AND ETHICS IN PUBLIC POLICY
PubPol 580
Fall 2017

Class Meetings: T/Th 2:30-4 pm
Class Location: 1120 Weill Hall

Instructor: Joy Rohde
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COURSE DESCRIPTION
We often think of policy analysis as a technical field in which we apply analytical tools to determine the most effective and efficient way to achieve policy goals. However, every time we enter the policy arena we confront normative questions with no agreed-upon answers: What should our policy goals be? What is the public good? And how do we make decisions when the normative goals of policies themselves conflict?

This course is based on the conviction that understanding the moral and ethical dimensions of politics and public policy is a skill necessary to effective policy analysis and a crucial foundation for any policy career. This course will familiarize you with a set of concepts and approaches for reasoning, arguing, and writing about the normative issues that confront people working in public policy. Our approach will be case-based. We will connect concepts from political philosophy and applied ethics—including utility, liberty, justice, and rights—to unpack and assess real-world challenges that face policy analysts and policymakers. Our examination will span topics from a variety of policy arenas. The focus of this section is primarily on U.S. policy—both domestic and foreign.

Students who take this course will:
- Gain an understanding of key concepts in applied ethics, including the ethics of professional practice;
- Develop and demonstrate the ability to think in a sophisticated and reflective manner about the values and goals of public policies in a variety of arenas;
- Develop the ability to articulate their own values and engage the normative claims of others;
- Develop and demonstrate the ability to communicate concisely and persuasively, both orally and in writing, about the moral and ethical dimensions of politics and public policy; and
- Develop the ability to integrate ethical considerations into decision-making.
COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. Class preparation, attendance, and participation (20%). This course is discussion-based. It demands that we each engage with complicated, controversial, and sensitive issues. Our class time will be devoted almost entirely to discussion. Active engagement with the reading material and thoughtful participation in discussions are crucial to the success of the course as well as to your own success in it. I expect you to come to class having done the reading and ready to talk to and learn from each other.

Contributions to class should reveal your familiarity with the assigned readings, your willingness to analyze the issues and problems we are discussing, and your ability to integrate and constructively criticize the comments of your classmates. Quality and sincerity of engagement matters far more than quantity of contribution. Your participation grade will be based on the following:

   a. Evidence of preparation—i.e. evidence that you have completed and reflected upon the readings prior to class;
   b. Evidence of substantive engagement with the course material in the classroom through regular, quality contributions to discussion and in-class exercises, as well as attentive and respectful listening and responding to peers. Formal debates and other structured in-class exercises are included in this part of your grade.
   c. Performance on occasional reading checks. From time to time, I will begin class with a quick reading check to ensure that you have done the reading.

I recognize that some students find it difficult to speak in large classes. This is a skill you should work on because speaking in large groups is important in many policy contexts. Those who are reluctant to speak up may compensate through: attending office hours to discuss issues raised in the course; and extra posts on the class discussion board relevant to course issues and materials, including your reflections of the readings and posting news articles or other resources about relevant issues, with your insightful commentary.

2. Discussion Board (10%). To assist you in fulfilling (1), during the course of the semester you will post to the class discussion board in advance of six class meetings. At least one will be a stand-alone post based on the readings (300-400 words in length). The rest will be shorter (150-200 word) responses to your classmates’ posts, informed by the readings. You are welcome to write additional posts or comments, either on the readings, on thoughts you have after our discussions, on current events/news related to the class, etc. The assigned posts and comments do not need to be elaborate, but they should not summarize the reading. They are think pieces. Your entries should reflect on all of the readings assigned for the day, not just a single one. You can also use your posts to explore the relationship between a particular set of readings and readings from another week, or between the readings and current events. Stand-alone posts are due by 9 am the day before class. Response posts are due at 1 pm on the day the readings are discussed. I will draw on them to frame discussion.

3. Case Presentation (10%). You will present a case in class along with two or three of your classmates. Your case should unpack the ethical questions raised by the topic for the day, offer a new twist on those questions, or examine the ethical questions under consideration in a different context (i.e., a different national, regional, or policy context).
You will have thirty-five minutes of class time for this exercise, and the instructor will send you guidance in advance of class on your particular topic.

4. **Writing Assignments (60%).**
   a. Op-Ed (15%), due October 18; approx. 750 words.
   b. Memo #1 (20%), due November 17; approx. 800 words.
   c. Memo #2 (25%), due December 18; 1500 words max.

**Course Policies**

1. Attendance: Because this course depends heavily upon participation, I expect you to make every effort to attend all sessions. Notify the GSI in advance if you will miss class; excused absences can be granted for things like illness and family emergencies, but only if we hear from you in advance. Any unexplained absences will negatively affect your grade, as will repeated tardiness. Refrain from going in and out of the room during class.
2. Late assignments: Extensions require arrangements with the instructor well in advance of the due date. Late assignments will lose one full grade for each day, or fraction thereof, that they are late.
3. Academic honesty: All students are expected to abide by the University’s standards of academic honesty, integrity, and professionalism. For details, see [http://www.rackham.umich.edu/policies/academic_and_professional_integrity/](http://www.rackham.umich.edu/policies/academic_and_professional_integrity/).
4. Electronic devices: Laptops and other devices are NOT allowed in class. While I recognize that this may cause consternation, such technologies negatively impact the character and quality of class discussion. Because discussion is so important to the intellectual task we face, the costs of laptops outweigh the benefits. Out of respect to the instructor and your fellow students, put your cell phone away for the duration of class.
5. Syllabus: Because many topics we cover are subjects of ongoing discussion, I may make occasional changes to the course readings over the semester. I will always notify you in advance of any changes.

**Ford School and UM Policies**

**Inclusivity at the Ford School:** Members of the Ford School community represent a rich variety of backgrounds and perspectives. We are committed to providing an atmosphere for learning that respects diversity. While working together to build this community we ask all members to:

- share their unique experiences, values and beliefs
- be open to the views of others
- honor the uniqueness of their colleagues
- appreciate the opportunity that we have to learn from each other in this community
- value one another’s opinions and communicate in a respectful manner
- keep confidential discussions that the community has of a personal (or professional) nature
- use this opportunity together to discuss ways in which we can create an inclusive environment in Ford classes and across the UM community.
**Academic Integrity:** The Ford School academic community, like all communities, functions best when its members treat one another with honesty, fairness, respect, and trust. We hold all members of our community to high standards of scholarship and integrity. To accomplish its mission of providing an optimal educational environment and developing leaders of society, the Ford School promotes the assumption of personal responsibility and integrity and prohibits all forms of academic dishonesty, plagiarism and misconduct. Academic dishonesty may be understood as any action or attempted action that may result in creating an unfair academic advantage for oneself or an unfair academic advantage or disadvantage for any other member or members of the academic community. Plagiarism involves representing the words, ideas, or work of others as one’s own in writing or presentations, and failing to give full and proper credit to the original source. Conduct, without regard to motive, that violates the academic integrity and ethical standards will result in serious consequences and disciplinary action.

Additional information regarding academic dishonesty, plagiarism and misconduct and their consequences is available at: [http://www.rackham.umich.edu/current-students/policies/academic-policies...](http://www.rackham.umich.edu/current-students/policies/academic-policies...)

**Accommodations for Students with Disabilities:** If you believe you need an accommodation for a disability, the University's Services for Students with Disabilities office (SSD) can be a valuable resource with which to start. In addition, if you believe you need an accommodation for a disability in any of your courses, please let the course instructor know at your earliest convenience. You need to allow sufficient time for your faculty member to respond, minimally 7 days, preferably more, in advance of when the accommodation is needed. Some aspects of courses may be modified to facilitate your participation and progress. As soon as you make your instructor aware of your needs, they can work with Student & Academic Services and/or the SSD office to help determine appropriate academic accommodations. Any information you provide will be treated as private and confidential.

**Student Mental Health and Wellbeing:** The University of Michigan is committed to advancing the mental health and wellbeing of its students. We acknowledge that a variety of issues, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug problems, and depression, directly impacts students’ academic performance. If you or someone you know is feeling overwhelmed, depressed, and/or in need of support, services are available. For help, contact Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) and/or University Health Service (UHS). For a listing of other mental health resources available on and off campus, visit: [http://umich.edu/~mhealth/](http://umich.edu/~mhealth/).
COURSE SCHEDULE
All course readings are available on Canvas.

Sept. 5: Introduction and Course Overview (1)

Sept. 7: Why Should We Care about Ethics? How Do We Think about Ethics? (2)
*Take Pew’s “Political Typology” Survey.

I. Utilitarianism, Deontology, Liberty, and their Discontents

Sept. 12: Utilitarianism (3)

Sept. 14: Deontology vs. Utilitarianism (4)
RECOMMENDED:

Sept. 19: Debating Utility, Preference, and Human Welfare (5) *Discussion Board Post*
*And take at least three Implicit Association Tests in preparation for a class discussion about the role unconscious bias may play in policy contexts.
Sept. 21: Confucianism, Feminist Care, and Other Approaches to Human Welfare (6)
http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/feminism-ethics/  
- It’s okay to skip Section 1. Feminist Ethics: Historical Background, and section 3.2.

RECOMMENDED:

Sept. 26: Liberty (7)
“HUD Secretary Castro announces new rulemaking,” Nov. 12, 2015.

II. Applying the Concepts I

Sept. 28: Bearing Arms (8) *Case Presentation*

Oct. 3: Speech and Harm (9) *Discussion Board Post*  *Case Presentation*
Ishani Maitra and Mary Kate McGowan, “Introduction,” in *Speech and Harm: Controversies over Free Speech*, 1-17
Oct. 5: Ethics and Cost-Benefit Analysis (10)

Oct. 10: Nudging or Shoving? (11) *Case Presentation*

Oct. 12: NO CLASS—Prof. Rohde out of town

Oct. 17: NO CLASS—Fall Study Break

**OCT 18, First Writing Assignment Due by 12pm in Canvas**

III. Justice and Rights

Oct. 19: Justice (12)

RECOMMENDED:

Oct. 24: Justice and Educational Opportunity (13) *Discussion Board Post*


**RECOMMENDED:**


**Oct. 26: Rights (14)**


UN Declaration of Human Rights.


**IV. Applying the Concepts II**

**Oct. 31: Gender Equality (15)**


TBD: Most current administration family leave proposal

**Nov. 2: Racial Equality (16)**

Read at least one of these two:


And also read:


RECOMMENDED:

**Nov. 7: Famine Relief (17) ** *Discussion Board Post* *Case Presentation*
TBD: reading on current famine relief policy debate

**Nov. 9: Immigration (18)**
RECOMMENDED:

**Nov. 14: Climate Change (19) ** *Case Presentation*
And read the documents for your assigned nation in the appropriate Canvas folder.

RECOMMENDED:
V. Ethics of Policy Practice

Nov. 16: Deliberative Democratic Approaches to Policy Problems (20)
Joy’s Memo re: Oregon Health Act
And refresh your memory of:

**NOV. 17: Second Writing Assignment due by 8 pm in Canvas**

Nov. 21: Lying (21) *Case Presentation*
Kennedy School of Government Case Program, “Ethical Problems in Public Careers: Lying.”

Nov. 23: NO CLASS—Thanksgiving Recess

Nov. 28: Dirty Hands (22) *Discussion Board Post*
First, read at least one of:
And also read:

Nov 30: Whistleblowing (23) *Case Presentation*

RECOMMENDED:
Watch: *Silenced* (2014), Dir. James Spione
Listen: This American Life #536: The Secret Recordings of Carmen Segarra,
https://www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/536/the-secret-recordings-of-carmen-segarra
**Dec. 5: Ethics in a Bureaucracy (24)**

*Case Presentation*

**Dec. 7: Ethics in Policy Research (25)**

**Dec. 12: Standards of Ethical Conduct (26)**
U.S. Office of Government Ethics, “Standards of Ethical Conduct for Employees of the Executive Branch,” July 1, 2011 (skim)

***DEC. 18: FINAL ASSIGNMENT DUE BY 8 PM IN CANVAS***